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Philly colleges don't have to report all crimes that happen near campus. Should that law change?

Limited reporting requirements under federal law mean three 2021 murders that occurred near Temple University went unaccounted for in the school's annual crime report.



Jeffrey Doshna, an associate professor and president of the Temple Association of University Professionals, at intersection of North 13th and Norris Streets on Temple University campus. He thinks the university should have somehow noted student Samuel Collington's murder in its crime report. [Read more](#) Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

by Susan Snyder and Ryan W. Briggs
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When professor Jeffrey Doshna read Temple University's latest crime report, he was immediately struck by a seeming omission.

The murder of Samuel Collington last November, less than two blocks from a campus building, wasn't reflected in the statistics. In fact, the university reported zero murders either on or off its main North Philadelphia campus for 2021, just as it has for every past year on record.

By federal law, Temple didn't leave anything out. Universities are required to report only crimes that occur directly on campus, on public property adjacent to campus, or at off-campus affiliated

university buildings. The result is that killings that took place last year in what many consider Temple's neighborhood — on the 1700 block of North 16th Street, the 1700 block of Cecil B. Moore Avenue, or the 2200 block of North Park Avenue, where Collington died — are unaccounted for in Temple's annual crime report.

Still, Doshna, an associate professor of planning and community development and president of the faculty union, found it jarring not to see Collington's shooting death noted in the Clery report, meant to give students, parents, and the public-at-large a better sense of campus crime.

Although the Nov. 28 carjacking outside Collington's off-campus residence was outside the border of the Temple University police patrol zone, it was well within sight of the Johnson and Hardwick dorms, Annenberg Hall, and the Newman Center.

"I understand how it didn't get reported," said Doshna. "But it seemed a little bit weird, especially when we've got such a high-profile case involving a student just a few blocks from a campus building."

Some say that the law needs to change, that campuses should at least have to report crimes within their police department patrol zone or in off-campus areas where a critical mass of their students live — what any stakeholder would want to know about the quality of life at school.

Others disagree, saying the law's intent was to document crime on campuses, and it would be unfair to require reporting where campus police aren't the primary patrol agency.



Sam Collington, 21, was a Temple University student majoring in political science. He was shot and killed in an apparent robbery and carjacking in the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 28. Courtesy of Collington family

“We feel that the patrol zone is already too large and [Collington’s death] happened outside of those boundaries,” where Philadelphia police are the primary patrol agency, said Ken Kaiser, Temple’s senior vice president and chief operating officer. “So, to be judged on these incidents that happen in that area is not a true reflection of Temple University.

“Where do you draw the line?”

But lawyer **Tom Kline**, who is representing Collington’s family in potential civil actions, said leaving Collington out of the crime report was “a glaring omission.”

“In order to paint a picture of safety, you have to create some reasonable net around a campus rather than just the designated campus for Temple,” Kline said. “Students live off campus at every major university in Philadelphia and certainly every school in the country, so the question is: Are students going to be safe when attending and living as residents in that community? And that can be broader than the campus map.”

What does Clery law cover exactly?

Enacted in 1990, the Clery law is named for Jeanne Clery, a 19-year-old Lehigh University student who was raped and killed in her dorm room in 1986. Universities are required to issue a report

every October summarizing crimes for the prior three calendar years that occurred on campus, at off-campus affiliated university buildings, or on public property adjacent to campus.

That last part has generally been interpreted as only extending to streets or sidewalks directly girding university property. In other words, a crime on one side of the street might be included in the university's annual crime report, but another down the block might not.

That leaves large neighborhood areas — where many students live — outside the required reporting zone.

As a result, Temple's archived Clery safety reports indicate there hasn't been a murder on campus or on public property surrounding Temple's campus since at least 2016. (The university has removed disclosures stretching beyond that year.)

Though if someone were standing behind Temple's Newman Center when Collington was killed, they would have been able to look north and watch the incident unfold.



A teddy bear lies as a memorial on the location where a Temple University student was shot and killed in North Philadelphia. JOSE F. MORENO / Staff Photographer

Other murders have occurred well within the patrol zone, a quadrant drawn north from Jefferson to Susquehanna Streets and from 18th to Ninth Streets, with an additional chunk covering athletic fields. Still, they were just shy of campus property that would require mandatory disclosure under Clery.

For instance, in July 2021, 15-year-old Sabria Gaymon was shot to death on the 1700 block of North 16th Street, steps from a blue Temple police security pylon and across the street from the rear of Temple's Aramark Training Complex.

If she had been found a few doors to the north, on Montgomery Avenue, her death likely would have been included in the annual report.

And 18-year-old Ahmir Jones was shot and killed in the 1700 block of Cecil B. Moore Avenue on Nov. 16, 2021, during a robbery. That's in the patrol zone, but a couple of blocks from campus, so his shooting, too, was omitted.



Sabria Gaymon, 15, was shot and killed on July 26, 2021, on the 1700 block of North 16th Street, across the street from the rear of Temple's Aramark Training Complex. Lance Gaymon

Other shootings occurred on campus. In one, on June 5, 2021, a 29-year-old male was shot in front of the Insomnia Cookies Bakery, which is located under Morgan Hall, a dorm on Broad Street.

This was included in Temple's Clery report, but because the shooting was not fatal, it was counted — just as some police departments do — as aggravated assault, along with stabbings and fistfights.

What's practical and what's transparent

Jennifer Griffin became vice president for public safety at Temple in July after Charles Leone stepped down in March amid rising off-campus crime. She said it's not practical for the university to report on all crimes that occur on off-campus property, even within its patrol zone. When Temple police respond and the incident doesn't involve a Temple student or employee, city police take over, she said. Temple police don't always get reports on those, she said.

Officials also noted that Collington's death was well-publicized and that anyone wanting information about crime in Temple's neighborhood could get it from the city Police Department.



Ken Kaiser, vice president and chief operating officer, and Jennifer Griffin, vice president for public safety, on Temple University's campus. They say that the university is following the law in its Clery report disclosures and that it should not be required to include crimes that occur in the broader neighborhood. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

Laura Egan, senior director of programs at the Clery Center, the nonprofit that guides colleges on how best to adhere to the law, said that while off-campus incidents occurring within a university's police patrol zone may not qualify for inclusion in the annual security report, they should still be included in its daily crime log. The Clery Act requires campuses to maintain the log, capturing reports of crimes made to campus police or security that occurred within its patrol jurisdiction.

The crime log that Temple maintains online stretches back only a few weeks. The university instructs those seeking older reports to visit its campus police headquarters to view records.

Gianni Quattrocchi, student government president, said most students would consider where Collington was killed Temple's campus because of its proximity.

"Even if it didn't occur on campus, I do think that colleges should report when students are a victim of a crime," he said. "... Transparency is always in the best interest of the students and the parents."



The 2200 block of North Park Avenue just north of Temple University's Campus where Collington was killed last year. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

Both Quattrocchi and Doshna, the faculty union president, said they have heard increasing concerns from faculty and students about public safety. Some parents last year hired private security for their children.

The implications for campuses and students

Temple isn't the only city university fielding concerns. At Drexel last month, president John A. Fry in a message to the West Philadelphia campus community said the school had begun adding extra patrols in areas where evening classes are held and around recreational facilities open later in the evening. It expanded shuttle bus services and the school was mulling a potential expansion of police patrol boundaries north of campus, where many students live.

"Many Drexel parents have reached out to me to express their apprehension about the state of public safety on and around Drexel's campus and wanting to know what we are doing to keep their children and all our students and employees safe," Fry wrote. "These concerns are entirely justified, and I share them."

In addition to safety concerns, crime around college campuses can have another deleterious effect: lower enrollment.

Kaiser, Temple's COO, acknowledged that crime or the perception of it has been a factor in the 6.4% enrollment drop this year.

"We'd be lying to ourselves or foolhardy if we thought otherwise," Kaiser said.

Allegations of an unsafe campus can be “devastating” to enrollment and admissions, said Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president at the Washington-based American Council on Education.

Yet, urban campuses generally, said Hartle, tend to be safer than surrounding communities, as they often have their own police departments and heavily populated areas. He doesn’t think the Clery law reporting requirements should be expanded to include police patrol zones and that doing so could create “a negative incentive” for schools.

“You’re basically encouraging schools to narrow their patrol zones, not expand them,” he said.

For students, crime has an impact on their sense of well-being.



Temple University student Maggie Dunleavy lived in the university's off-campus neighborhood last year. This year, she moved home to Bucks County and commutes. Susan Snyder

Maggie Dunleavy, 21, a psychology major from Warrington, said she lived in an off-campus neighborhood last year but moved home to Bucks County this year to commute, in part because of crime concerns.

“I just was tired of not being able to walk outside of our apartment after 5 p.m. alone,” she said.

Olivia Sulewski, 21, a junior, also from Bucks County who lives off campus on 17th Street, between Berks and Montgomery, said last month there had been four cars stolen in the area.

In the meantime, her mother, who signed up to receive TU alerts — Temple’s communication system for notifying the campus community of a potential serious and continuing threat on or near campus — texts her when she sees an alert, asking if she is OK. In October alone, Temple issued 10 alerts — required by Clery law — for shots fired, shootings, and armed robberies.



"I feel like you only really feel unsafe when you aren't from the community and that tarnishes your perspective," said Kierra West, a junior communications studies major from Philadelphia. Susan Snyder

Kierra West, 23, of Philadelphia, said she grew up in the city and saw how the school district was underfunded and how there was little for youth to do after school. It's not hard to understand that some get into trouble, she said.

"I feel like you only really feel unsafe when you aren't from the community and that tarnishes your perspective," said West, who commutes from her home in Germantown. "You hear all the crime. You get our TU alerts for it all the time and you expect criminals to be everywhere, but being from this environment, understanding what these kids are going through, I don't feel unsafe."

Even while Temple officials acknowledge they are hearing more concerns from parents about safety, they maintain the fears are driven more by perception than reality.

Overall reports of serious crime on or in public areas immediately adjacent to the main North Philadelphia campus have actually declined, according to Temple's Clery reports. Between 2017 and 2021, they fell by nearly half, from 104 incidents to just 66 last year.

In two police service areas under the jurisdiction of the city's 22nd District that largely encompass the Temple police patrol zones as well as a larger area where some students live — from Lehigh to Poplar and 10th to 22nd Streets — overall crime also declined, according to statistics from the Philadelphia Police Department. Total recorded criminal incidents were down 13% from 2017 through 2021.

However, violent crime in those same service areas increased dramatically during that period. So even as robberies or burglaries fell, murders and aggravated assaults increased nearly 40% from 2017 through the end of 2021.

Both Kaiser and Griffin said Temple is taking steps to increase security on and off campus, including the addition of eight officers, with more hires to come.

The university has expanded its walking escort service and shuttles. It recently launched a program to encourage landlords to improve lighting and security; and it's maintaining a list of those landlords in its police patrol zone that are deemed quality housing. The university will pay landlords up to \$2,500 to add cameras and more lighting.

Griffin said she has completed an audit of 1,300 surveillance cameras on and around campus. The university also plans to install more "code blue" emergency phones with direct contact to police dispatchers, but it can only put those on campus property.

Kaiser said no matter what, Temple can't guarantee students' safety — something he says he readily tells parents.

"But the closer you live to campus, the better it is," he said.

Doshna sees the need for more information. Whether or not it's required, he said, Temple should document in the Clery report serious crimes that occur in its patrol zone.

"The law sets a minimum," he said.

Egan, of the Clery Center, acknowledged the law isn't perfect and agreed there's nothing preventing a university from including other incidents that have occurred in areas that students frequent.

"They could say, 'We don't have any control or we don't patrol those areas, but we know that this maybe is a persistent problem or a pattern and we want to tell our students about that,'" she said.